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ABSTRACT

This report presents summaries of speeches given at a conference held at Cumberland Lodge (England) in 1988 on the subject of education and training of young people between 16 and 19. The guarantee of either a training or an educational program for all in this age range is explored and the issue of deferring full-time employment to age 18 or 19 is argued. The social and moral aspects of education in the rush to meet economic and technological demands of society are addressed. Areas discussed include questions of access, examinations and qualifications, and issues surrounding actual implementation of education and training initiatives from the consumer perspective. Points of agreement from two main discussion groups are the following: (1) age 18 should be the normal entry point into full-time employment; (2) there should be a wide variety of provision for 16-19 year olds for which effective collaboration between providers is vital; (3) flexibility is essential, maximizing choice; (4) new access routes to further and higher education need to be developed; (5) a comprehensive framework of assessment is required; (6) an awareness of career possibilities and personal skill potential need to be fostered in young people long before age 16 to enable them to select sensible career paths; and (7) additional funding and resources (possibly involving industry) are needed. (GLR)

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A ST CATHARINE'S CONFERENCE HELD AT CUMBERLAND LODGE NOVEMBER 1988

St Catharine's Conference Report No. 13

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A YOUTH GUARANTEE: TOWARDS EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ALL FROM 16–19

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Introduction

St Catharine's conferences are an important part of the work of the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's. On average six such conferences, focusing on a variety of contemporary issues, are held each year. Participation is by invitation and is intended to bring together people representative of a range of interest groups and of society in general.

This conference was designed to consider the education and training of young people between 16 and 19. The guarantee of either a training or an educational programme for all in this age range is considered by many to be a desirable target, hence the use of the phrase 'Youth Guarantee' in the conference title. Participants came from a wide range of professional areas, interest groups and official organisations, as can be seen from the list which appears at the end of this report.

The conference was addressed by:—

Sir Christopher Ball, Kellogg Visiting Fellow, Department for External Studies of the University of Oxford, formerly Warden of Keble College and Chairman of the National Advisory Board for Public Sector Higher Education in England

Baroness Blatch, Leader of the Cambridgeshire County Council, 1981–85, and a Government spokesperson on education

David Falcon, Director General of the Royal Institute of Public Administration and formerly Director of Education (Post Schools) with the Inner London Education Authority

Dr Mark Hayward, a teacher at Orton Longueville School, Peterborough

Dr Gordon Higginson, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton

Dr Gordon McGregor, Principal, the College of Ripon and York St John

Margaret Maden, Deputy County Education Officer, Warwickshire

Dr Terry Melia, Chief Inspector, Further Education, at the Department of Education and Science

Brian O'Riordan, fisheries specialist with the Intermediate Technology Development Group

Ronald Somerville, Divisional Chairman, T&N plc

Dr Bengt Thelin, Director of Education, Swedish National Board of Education

In his address of welcome, the Principal of the St Catharine's Foundation, **Tim Slack**, expressed appreciation of a generous donation by the **John S. Cohen Foundation** towards the cost of the conference.

Summary

Far reaching changes are currently being introduced into our educational system, some would say without adequate debate and enquiry taking place beforehand. At the same time critical changes are occurring which, though external to the education system, are likely to greatly affect it in the future. These include the declining number of young people, increasing skill demands of a technology-dominated economy and societal changes which have led to rising levels of juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, etc. This was the background against which the education and training needs of the 16–19 age group was discussed.

At the root of the debate was the question of whether entry into full-time employment should be deferred to 18 or 19. The diversity of opinion will be evident from the pages which follow. There seemed

to be general agreement that we were not doing enough at present, although the contribution of the YTS (Youth Training Scheme), it was suggested, had been underestimated. The Swedish example, outlined to the conference, underlined the inadequacy of our provision. Throughout there was frequent reminder that we should not lose sight of the social and moral aspects of education in our haste to meet the economic and technological demands of society. It was encouraging, however, that the technologists and industrialists present emphasized the rapidity of change and stressed the need for broadly educated young people capable of adapting to change and innovation rather than highly-qualified job-specific technicians. Above all, it is necessary, as Sir Christopher Ball reminded us in a memorable closing address, to have foremost in our minds the needs and aspirations of the young people themselves.

Education and Training Post–16: a Time of Change

We are living through exciting times and have great changes in prospect, thought **Terry Melia**. However, those contributing to these changes should heed the words of T.S. Elliot, that "time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past".

Dissatisfaction with post-war education, particularly at the secondary level, was highlighted by the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in his Ruskin speech of ten years ago, and has been reiterated by the present government. Others have attributed the UK's poor economic performance to the fact that the UK workforce is relatively poorly educated and trained compared with major competitors. The Education Reform Act is a response to these dissatisfactions. The aims underpinning the Act are the need to raise standards at all levels, to improve education's efficiency and effectiveness, and to widen access to further and higher education.

The most significant changes proposed in the Act are directed at the schools sector. These include the introduction of a national curriculum, the setting of attainment targets for pupils and the strengthening of technical and vocational aspects of the curriculum. In further and higher education the emphasis in the Act is on governance, management and the need to make these sectors more responsive to the needs of industry and commerce.

As well as government policy, attitudes and demand for post–16 education are influenced by economic factors, demography, participation levels, examination arrangements, employment openings and training opportunities. In the next ten years the number of 16–18 year olds will fall by about one-third with a potential loss in entrants to further and higher education of 40,000 and 60,000 per annum, respectively. However, this demographic downturn provides an opportunity to widen access and increase participation in further and higher education at relatively little cost. If this is to occur our post–16 education institutions will need to modify entry requirements; develop new and challenging courses; improve arrangements for student induction, support and guidance; develop credible credit transfer arrangements and modify and improve teaching methods. If this expansion in provision is to be achieved, we need to instil in the people of this country a belief in the value of higher education similar to that which Dr Melia had observed amongst Americans during a recent visit to the USA.

As one of the world's leading trading nations and economies, the United Kingdom needs an adequate supply of well-educated and adequately trained people if manufacturing and service industries are to survive and thrive. The Education Reform Act not only recognises this need but provides a framework within which entrepreneurship and innovation are encouraged. It places a heavy responsibility on our schools and colleges to be responsive to the needs of customers, to raise standards and to keep pace with developments in a rapidly changing world. The Act provides not only challenges but scope to change and innovate and Dr Melia was sure that the education service would respond successfully to these challenges and opportunities.

In the discussion which followed there was a focus on the options available to young people at 16. The drop-out from education at the end of the statutory period was very much linked to socio-economic status, and at 16 job opportunities were attractive, particularly in the South-East. Moreover, pressure from the labour market is likely to increase as the number of school leavers declines. Should we continue to accept a free labour market for 16 year olds who might be seduced into early employment to their long term cost? In a technological society employers will increasingly seek well educated-recruits, and others will not find worthwhile jobs. Could we see major employers fostering recruitment by offering scholarships to young people still in full time education?

There is a need in the post-statutory period to focus on low attainment. This is not the same as low ability. Providing access to the full range of opportunities was not easy, given the divisions between schools and further education and between public and work-based vocational training systems, and it was suggested that the recent Act would make such institutional shifts even more difficult.

The American example had been cited by Dr Melia: how, it was asked, could Britain acquire the same motivation towards education? Do employers in Britain undervalue education? Should we consider some contribution from employers, maybe in the form of taxation, towards the cost of education?

> *Do employers in Britain undervalue education?*

A final point drawn from a very wide-ranging discussion was the question of who, in our education system, are the consumers and what are they seeking? We tended to think of parents and employers as consumers, rather than the young people themselves. In this context are we in danger of training youngsters to be competitive, yet failing to offer them the compassion and caring values that society needs?

Balances and Values

Gordon McGregor suggested that a question mark might have been inserted in the conference title after the word 'guarantee', because 35 years in teaching had taught him that in this area there could be no guarantees.

Balances

In 1870 compulsory education was introduced with the idea that it would both create an educated and skilful workforce and solve the country's social problems. 118 years later we know that to be wrong: compulsory education, like compulsory worship, doesn't work. You can't compel anyone to be educated.

> *Compulsory education, like compulsory worship, doesn't work*

In similar vein, you can't compel anyone to show enterprise as the Government seems to believe. What they are talking about is cash and economy orientated and education must take account of more than that. Young people have to understand that what is on offer is good for them, whether it gives them a job or not. It is about you, as well as about making money. Related to that is the fashionable demand that education should be relevant. In reality it is difficult to know what is relevant today and impossible to project accurately what will be relevant in ten years time. Those in education must have the courage to say that the constant cry for relevance is irrelevant!

There is danger that we focus on examinations at the expense of education. On the other hand, we should not be dismissive of qualifications, having in mind that the word suggests "having the quality of". Unfortunately in Britain we tend to stress credentials more than qualities. They are not the same thing.

Staff attitudes are also crucial and students are more alert to them than we think. Tenure and salary differentials do not help, creating 'trapped professionals'. People tend to be promoted for being good at something quite different from that which they will do in their new post. Once in a good job they cannot move without losing face or taking a drop in salary. Greater mobility would mean more fulfilment and this would be possible if no one was expected to stay in a post for more than six or seven years. We don't help young people by presenting them, in our institutions, a staffing model based on status rather than fulfilment.

> *The constant cry for relevance is irrelevant!*

We badly need more teachers with work experience outside teaching. However, it is extraordinary to be considering the use of untrained teachers at this time when we have an enquiry into discipline in secondary schools, and when we ought to recognise that there are some essentially unteachable groups. In further education there is room for both the formally trained and those with inspirational skills.

One final and important balance that we have to strike for staff is between commitment to a local institution and awareness of being part of a nation, of a continent and of the world. In this context the aim of ERASMUS[1], to have in ten years 10% of higher education students receiving a third of their education in another country, may seem a muted ambition. Yet so uninternational are we that Britain will have great difficulty in reaching this target.

Values

Values are useless unless they underpin everything that we do. In terms of access, for example, we need to embrace the French idea of *education permanente*. People should be encouraged to "wander in and out" of our institutions and to "sniff the culture". The government is now talking about greater access to higher education, but it is nowhere great enough.

[1] The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. This aims to encourage greater student and staff mobility within Europe in universities and other institutions of higher education.

We undervalue enjoyment, which should be the first principle of education. Most of those at the conference, it was suggested, were there because there was "something in our education which set us on fire". Much of our primary education is brilliant, but at the secondary level the teacher's work is made unnecessarily difficult by the "shackles of the examination system".

Beyond the schools we have to get rid of the absurdly snobbish divisions between further and higher education, and also to provide facilities in further education which are comparable to those in higher education.

We need to trust the potential of young people. The Robbins Committee reported "the pool of ability is greater than we have believed". That, he suggested, was the real 'Robbins principle'.

The challenging nature of some of Dr McGregor's ideas was evident in the discussion that followed. However, a fresh focus was provided by the suggestion that it was at 14—even 13—that the diversity of educational provision ought to begin. By 14 many had concluded that school was not for them: why should they continue to make life difficult for teachers when they could be getting something more specific for their needs? However, there was unease at the suggestion "O.K., 14 year olds want to do YTS at Fords of Dagenham. Why not?" Do we not owe it to our young people to give them more than this? It was noted that in West Germany they were considering a scheme whereby everyone between 16 and 19 was entitled to at least a year at a college of the American liberal arts type: a year to get away and explore oneself. There were obvious problems: many would see this as 'more school'. More realistically, another speaker pointed out that for young people in the 16–19 age group to "find themselves" and direct their lives, a guarantee of income security was essential, particularly in the context of the relative instability of today's family units. Related to this was the rôle of the youth services which tended to be overlooked by educationalists.

Access

This session opened with two speakers offering contrasting viewpoints. The first, **David Falcon**, developed the theme around his experience of working with Humberside County Council and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA).

In Humberside, given its amalgam of industrial and rural areas, education had to be tailored to young people's needs, rather than approaching it from an institutional viewpoint. It was necessary too, to recognise the social dimension of education, beyond its traditional academic and vocational elements. It was also evident that the relationship between components of an education system require as much attention as that given to the components themselves.

A particular worry was the way in which young people drifted from compulsory into post-compulsory education. Every 5th year pupil should be made to stop and think and the careers office played a key rôle in this. Raising the profile of the careers service was of critical importance.

The post-school education system of Inner London can be described by analogy with the transport system: polytechnics had their equivalent in the Inter-city 125 trains (high prestige, high cost and competing in the national market); Colleges of Further Education: Network South East (bulk movers of population, generally highly efficient); Adult Education Institutes: Dial-a-Ride Bus Services (highly flexible, highly adaptable and responsive to people's needs). The careers service could be equated to the travel advice service, but the youth services had no clear equivalent—the lost property office didn't offer a lost people's service! Again, getting the relationship right between these key components was essential.

> *Every 5th year pupil should be made to stop and think*

A key requirement of the Careers Advice and Counselling Service was that it should understand the needs of the community and relay them to the providers of education. The colleges tended to say "just tell them about our courses", whilst the response tended to be "your courses are not meeting our needs".

David Falcon concluded with comment on three aspects of the recent Act. Firstly that giving the opportunity for schools to opt out of the system would make it extremely difficult for authorities to tackle the key problems to be faced in rationalising provision for the 16–19 age group.

Secondly, the voucher system: will schools continue to give unbiased advice on options at 16 if Heads know that their budget relates to the number of pupils on roll?

And thirdly, how could the smaller authorities which have replaced ILEA undertake effective further education planning relative to the huge labour market of the London area?

It was, said **Baroness Blatch**, essentially as a consumer that she was speaking, although she served as a school and college governor and had also been a member of a local education authority.

In considering 16–19 provision it was necessary first to take account of the preparation given in the

schools. The bottom 20% provides the major challenge, often adding to their problems by not wanting to enter the labour market. She suggested, from experience in Peterborough, that such people—many from the ethnic minorities—are totally alienated from the system and a major change of attitude is required. 'Employability' is the issue: we all have to live within a framework and developing a sense of responsibility, not just to oneself but to those around, should be very much a part of preparing young people for work.

Expectations of children need to be raised: the tolerance of some teachers to shoddy work helps no-one. Coming to terms with one's limitations is an important part of the educational process.

She was not entirely negative about the schools sector, but 'distraught' that a professional teaching council had not emerged: the voice of the individual teacher was unheard; just that of the unions, some schools and the LEAs.

There has never been so much choice for young people on leaving school and the debate is how we prepare them to use that choice to the best advantage. Staying-on rates are critical, but she did not think that paying young people to do so would help. If you did, you would have to pay them rather a lot of money.

There has never been so much choice for young people

In Higher Education she preferred a voucher system. Although related, teaching and research should be separated out for financing. There is a need for more accountability of teaching efficiency and effectiveness.

The Education Reform Bill will make all more accountable—governors, teachers and children. She is "an absolute enthusiast" for opting out, which will allow schools now dependent on a 'raft of services' to become independent, determining their needs and buying in accordingly. The shake up is very exciting for Lady Blatch, who hoped that "something positive will emerge from the ashes".

Uninhibited debate is needed on the issues and the defensiveness of teachers is very sad. The higher education sector is talking and the schools need to do so: some kind of professional teaching council might make that possible.

The focus of the speakers on career choice stimulated considerable discussion of schools-industry links. Changes underway were seen by some as threatening such schemes. The small number of firms participating was worrying but the declining number of 16–19 year olds would stir many into activity.

Attention was then directed to employed 16–19 year olds. Such in-service training as was available was poor and standards set by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) seemed unacceptably low when compared with other countries. It was pointed out that the NCVQ was a co-ordinating rather than a testing agency, and that regrettably its remit did not extend to A levels. There was need to unify A level and vocational/technical qualifications. This would raise the status of vocational/technical qualifications by allowing them, like A levels, to provide access to university.

Much discussion was devoted to work and 'employability' related issues: was this all that the 'Youth Guarantee' was about, asked someone? We need also to 'guarantee' the development of social, aesthetic and moral values and citizenship. Without the contribution to this of the voluntary sector, we would be a grossly impoverished society.

Another plea concerned the "lost children" who had been "failed by the schools at 16". Should we talk in these terms, was one response: is not education life-long?

Is there not already a guarantee in place?

There was some enthusiasm for the YTS scheme, which, it was suggested, "has opened our eyes to the abilities of young people we would not have looked at before". Was there not already a guarantee in place—continuation in full time education or two years in YTS? But some are choosing instead well-paid but dead-end jobs and losing the guarantee of future training.

The discussion finally turned to the rôle of education in society and the values we seemed to be promoting: some 16 year olds leave school "deeply and intelligently disaffected from the kind of society that we are creating and the values that it enshrines".

By intent the session had featured issues reflecting concerns on either side of the political divide. Nevertheless participants came away surprised by the degree of mutual understanding that was evident, underlining the value of off the record and frank discussion.

Examinations and Qualifications

Gordon Higginson began his talk by quoting from a recent report of the Council for Industry and Higher Education which showed that between 1978 and 1985 the engineering workforce had fallen by a

third whilst graduate employment had risen by a half. A second report, by the CBI on the lower productivity of British industry as compared with West Germany, concluded that "poorly educated workers and managers were the problem". The scale of that problem was shown by figures for 1981: Britain, with just 32% of her 16–18 year olds in full-time education and training, lagged far behind the USA (79%), Japan (69%), France (58%) and West Germany (40% but with a high number in compulsory part-time education).

Dr Higginson then turned to what he termed "the biggest self-inflicted act of social engineering that this country has ever experienced", namely the massive decline in the birthrate between 1964 and 1977 (from approximately a million live births per year to under 700,000), mainly due to the pill, but also to the availability of abortion.

The biggest act of social engineering... ever experienced

Whereas for the population as a whole the number of births fell by 35% during 1964–80, analysis by social class showed that the decline mainly affected Social Groups IV and V (semi-skilled and unskilled), Groups I and II (managerial and professional) having increased by 10%. If the upward migration through the social classes is taken into account, clearly the number of 18 year olds in Groups I and II increased by much more than 10%. As 70% of our university intake comes from these groups, some complacency might be detected in the universities, but for the country as a whole there is much to worry about.

Births for Group III (skilled manual and non-manual) have fallen by 45% and those of Groups IV and V (semi-skilled and unskilled) by 55%. Children of these groups traditionally leave school at 16 and the inducements of industry in a shrinking labour market will make staying on even less attractive. The reduced family size could help as would the success of GCSE and the new national curriculum.

Turning to what was on offer for the 16–19 age range, it was noted that whereas the range of ability is wide and continuous, the range of provision was wide but not continuous. There were many gaps to be filled.

Dr Higginson then commented on the A level examination, noting the six-fold increase in the number of entries between 1951, when it was first introduced, and 1985. As chairman of the recent government sponsored committee, whose central recommendations on the future of A levels had been rejected, he regretted the lost opportunity for change. Change would come, but tens of thousands of young people who could have benefited in the early 1990s were the losers.

The main recommendations of the committee were:—

- a "managed programme of change" to improve on a system which is "creaking with age", and in particular to stop the appalling proliferation of syllabuses
- syllabuses that broadened the range of study
- continuity with GCSE
- a formal counselling system for candidates
- a more informative and broadly-based system of assessment.

Turning to the university scene, he noted that the number of graduates entering industry was less than 25% and falling, whereas the number going into commerce and accountancy was rising fast: a very worrying trend. Akio Morita, Chairman of the Sony Corporation, commenting on the loss of manufacturing jobs in the US and the UK and the rise of service employment, suggests that the trend is destructive:—

> *"For in the long run an economy which has lost its manufacturing base has lost its vital centre. A service based economy has no engine to drive it... complacency about moving from manufacturing to a haven of high tech services, where workers sit at computers and exchange information all day, is entirely misplaced".*

There were many in Britain today who shared this complacency. The development of our manufacturing base is vital and the education system must respond to its needs.

The suggestion that Britain's manufacturing competence was in decline was challenged in the discussion that followed, although it was further emphasized that educational standards at all levels are inadequate to sustain improvements being achieved in productivity. In particular we need more flexibility in our educational system to produce the numbers needed with graduate level training in engineering and related areas. Vocational training needs to keep pace with newly developing areas, e.g. office technology.

Much discussion centred on the A level examination. What was its function, now that it is clearly doing more than providing for university entry? Should it take on more of the style of the GCSE? Are there lessons to be learned from the National Record of Vocational Achievement (NROVA), recently introduced for government funded training programmes? Letter grades are inadequate and

teacher collaboration could provide a more informative assessment of capabilities. Might this be developed into a 'life log book'? Support for this came from industry: social skills, attitudes, and the ability to think laterally were of greater significance than a handful of letter grades.

Reflection on the 'funding crisis' currently facing universities was put into context when the scale of the resources needed to provide for the big increase in post–16 full or substantial part-time education was indicated. There was prospect of at least a doubling of the 16–18 school population—and there are more teachers in the schools than there are students in the universities. The funding of higher education looks quite modest alongside that!

The Example of Sweden

Experiment and reform in education in Sweden after World War II was such, said **Bengt Thelin**, that their Nordic neighbours were able to adopt a cost-saving 'wait and see what happens in Sweden' attitude in their education policies.

> *"Democratization" emphasises the vital rôle of Swedish education*

Changes in Swedish education since the War can be highlighted by the keywords democratization, equalization, centralization and decentralization. The word **democratization** emphasizes the vital rôle of Swedish education in fostering the critical and independent thinking necessary in a truly democratic society. A prerequisite of a functioning democracy is access to school for all and in 1950 it was decided that schooling of a comprehensive type should be compulsory for all seven to 16 year olds—a policy which had been put into effect by 1962. This replaced an older system of parallel schools whereby only selected and privileged groups had access to secondary and upper secondary level education. Thus **equalization**, in the sense of equality of opportunity, was ensured. This reform was followed in 1970 by the introduction of the *gymnasieschool* (integrated upper secondary school) catering for 16–19 year olds.

Centralization has been evident in education policy making and in the introduction of national curricula at all levels. However, in other ways **decentralization** is the theme. Municipalities have responsibility for schools and within the national curricula there is freedom to devise teaching programmes. There has also been devolution of responsibility for teacher education and development work in education.

Dr Thelin then outlined the structure of school education in Sweden. Goals and guidelines were determined by the *Riksdag* (Parliament), with the National Board of Education (NBE) responsible for schools (the National Board of Universities and Colleges deals with higher education). Below the NBE are 24 County Education Committees which have an overseeing function and distribute state grants, responsibility for schools and adult education resting predominantly with the municipalities. In the schools staff, pupils and parents are involved in planning.

Pre-school education is available but not compulsory at six. At seven, children start nine years of compulsory school organised on comprehensive lines. (Britain, it was noted in discussion, offered 11 years of compulsory education: could we achieve more in the late teens if we started at seven?). Only 1% of Swedish children are educated privately. Upper secondary school, available for 16–19 year olds, is optional but 90% choose to continue. Programmes of study are divided into 27 'lines' of 2–4 years duration. Some prepare for higher education whilst others are vocational: there are more than 500 directly vocational courses. A quarter of the age group go on to university.

For the very gifted, eg. in sport, drama or music, there is specialised boarding provision in the *gymnasieschool*. It was noted in discussion that classes in junior school—the lower years of compulsory school—averaged 25 whereas they were of 30 thereafter—the opposite of our own school system.

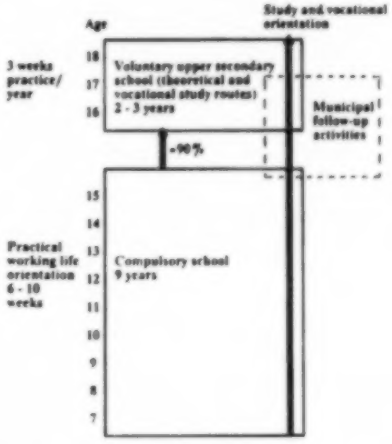
Finally, Dr Thelin turned to the Youth Guarantee which Sweden has offered for more than ten years, under which society has accepted responsibility for providing young people under 18 with either education or employment. Contact between school and working life first occurs during compulsory school. During the nine-year curriculum all students have to undertake 6–10 weeks' work experience. In addition there are study visits and teaching about work, arranged by school study and vocational guidance officers.

At the upper secondary level arrangements differ for those in theoretical or vocational lines. For the former there is a week's work experience in each grade. Work experience is not thought so necessary for those in vocational lines, where practical work dominates.

Not all continue to upper secondary school and for this group (approximately 10% of the total, shown by the third box on the right of the diagram) the municipal youth responsibility scheme was set up in 1976. School authorities, rather than employment related agencies, have responsibility for young people up to 18. There are also individual follow-up programmes (lasting up to six weeks and supported

by state grants), and a youth opportunities scheme. The latter is employment based but combines education with work. The employer is paid for those taken on under the scheme, who are paid for work and for attendance at lessons. The object is to improve basic knowledge and skills, thus easing transition into regular education or lasting work.

Cooperation school - working life in Sweden



Municipalities have freedom to determine the precise nature of their follow-up activities. Large towns have special units but in small places it could be carried out by a counsellor in a compulsory school.

Follow-up measures have been successful and the numbers coming through the system have declined, although numbers overall are declining in this age group. Indeed, a new problem will arise, namely a shortage of youth. This will lead to demographic imbalance, and 'societal anaemia', with its own problems.

There is currently a move towards education for all at the upper secondary level, although it is recognised that there will always be some for whom special arrangements will have to be made.

Education and Training in Practice

This panel session, chaired by **Margaret Maden**, provided contrasting perspectives, particularly consumer perspectives, on education and training.

> *The innate talent and ability of employees far exceeds their educational achievement*

An industrial viewpoint was provided by **Ronald Somerville**, who first outlined the major achievements of British industry in recent years, noting rising productivity and the proportion of GNP derived from external trade (on a per capita basis, double that of Japan). There are enormous possibilities for industry, particularly in Europe, but we need to guard against self indulgence in our society.

We have done well because the innate talent and abilities of employees far exceeds their educational achievement. But the incredible speed with which technology is moving means that we cannot continue in this way: change in the next decade is likely to outpace anything that has happened in the last 100 years and is occurring at "absolutely breathtaking speed". From the demand side there will be no stability in our education system!

Recent reports, sponsored by the Engineering Council and other bodies, have clearly indicated the need for educational ability rather than vocational competence in young people, and in particular an ability to cope with the demands of a changing world. Educational achievements, particularly in mathematics, compare very unfavourably with countries such as France and Germany. A recent paper from the Policy Studies Institute noted that a 50% increase in the next 20 years of those attaining general educational qualifications at 18 would only take us to where France already stands and therefore a doubling of that number would be a more desirable target. The YTS is no substitute for educational competence.

The CBI Cadbury Report shows clearly that industry is not effectively linking with education. Many companies are concerned only for their economic survival and leave involvement to others.

Ronald Somerville concluded with a comment based on his experience as Chairman of the Governors of the new Kingshurst City Technology College in Solihull. Such colleges were going into deprived areas with severe social problems, aiming to give to all an entitlement to some form of education up to the age of 18. They were emulating the practice of the best schools and had made an excellent start. Parental support—which was essential—had been excellent. There was already sponsorship for 18 of the planned 20 such schools, but their achievements would not become fully evident for another six or seven years. He hoped that there would not be a need for many more! Rather, that they should diffuse in a hybrid form to the whole of the education system.

Mark Hayward provided a teacher's perspective, structuring his talk around four alliterative words:—

FACILITATE: Teachers had a responsibility, formally and through the 'hidden curriculum', to develop the ability of young people to make decisions about their future, to enhance their self esteem and to enable them to make the most of their lives.

FAILURE: Whilst appreciating that schools were demanding of resources, were they adequately provided for, and did schools offer the most appropriate educational and training base? Were our expectations of young people too low? And would the new national curriculum help, given its emphasis on examining and on subject divisions? Would its demands deflect teachers from the more subtle messages they needed to put across?

OPPORTUNITIES: The range of opportunity needed to be extended for post–16 education, blurring the present distinction between school and technical education. Some element of de-schooling might be appropriate and distance learning techniques might be considered. There was need to consider the potential contribution to the education system of those who had not gone through traditional education channels.

OBSTACLES: There was an anti-education and anti-scholastic attitude in British society, not evident, for example, in that of France. Teachers, too, might be set in their ways. But did we not expect too much of our teachers, not giving them time to think, and to stand back from their work? An unhealthy dichotomy between teachers and educational administrators suggested an absence of shared goals.

Drawing upon his experience of intermediate technology in the Third World, **Brian O'Riordan** started with a Chinese proverb:—

> *"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Give a man some fishing tackle and teach him how to fish and he will be able to feed himself so long as he does not lose or break his equipment. Teach a man how to use his own resources to make his own fishing tackle and he'll be able to provide for himself, his family and the community for the rest of his life."*

This illustrates what education and training should aim to do—to equip the student with the life skills necessary to become a full and productive member of society. Teaching people to carry out particular functions is a short term solution.

A fundamental issue of 16–19 education is that it is a transitional stage when children become young adults. They move from a school society where they are treated as children to adult society where they are expected to act as responsible citizens. The pressures are awesome. Society seems consumer-orientated and technology based, requiring the acquisition of wealth for participation. Yet many leave school with bleak prospects, having little or no vision of the future but with the immediate reality of unemployment.

How do we tackle this major problem? Every effort must be made to keep people on at school: whilst schooldays should not necessarily be the happiest of one's life, they could be made more enjoyable. In particular, training and education should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Participatory training techniques could help, encouraging more to stay on.

> *When children become young adults... the pressures are awesome*

Students might be further encouraged if issues of global development and the environment featured more prominently in the curriculum, assisting them to develop a sense of identity, increasing self-knowledge and responsibility. A wider understanding of issues such as those raised in the Brundtland Report was vital. The attitudes of our society to the environment must change, as must relationships with other nations, particularly those of the Third World. And to change society's attitudes we must start in the schools.

> *Money... was identified as a key issue*

How to encourage more to stay on in training or education at 16 dominated discussion. Money, and the independence that goes with it, was identified as a key issue. Between 16 and 19 one enters adulthood, and "having something in your pocket which is yours" is important. Moreover, the financial situation of many families is such that children could not be kept in school or college beyond 16: they were needed to earn rather than learn. A strong case was made for a maintenance grant on a scale comparable with that offered for YTS programmes. There was a clear benefit to the country, both economic and social, in having young people continue in education or training programmes. It was stressed, however, that "we all want youngsters to stay on because its worth it, and we want the 'worth it' not to be just in financial terms". Educationalists also need to sell their wares more effectively.

> *We want the 'worth it' not to be just in financial terms*

European approaches to the problem were cited. France, by introducing minimum wage legislation, has effectively destroyed the labour market for young people, resulting in a high stay-on rate for vocational, technical and general education. In Germany the labour market for 16 year olds has largely disappeared due to health and safety legislation, combined with parental and societal pressure. There the status of a skilled worker,

achieved through a rigorous three-year training, is such that it is virtually unheard of for parents to want anything else. By contrast, in this country we seem to have become "locked into a low skill/low quality equilibrium"—producing standardised mass produced goods with a fairly low level of technology and a low level of skills. We need young people with skills and training more appropriate to modern manufacturing industry—the level of training needed for this country to lead rather than follow. Although there was some support for the efforts of the YTS, many felt that there was considerable room for improvement.

As Margaret Maden commented at the end, speakers had made a useful attempt to bridge the chasm which tends to separate the needs of the economy from the needs of young people. Although there was (regrettably) no 16–19 year old participating some understanding was gained of the economic imperatives which influence career decisions at this crucial time.

Discussion Groups Report

The conference twice divided into smaller discussion groups to consider the possible structure and content of a balanced education/training programme for the years 16–19. A range of detailed suggestions emerged. Points on which a degree of consensus was evident included:—

- that 18—some thought 19—should be perceived as the normal entry point into full-time employment
- there should be a wide variety of provision for 16–19 year olds for which effective collaboration between providers was vital
- flexibility was essential, maximising choice
- new access routes to further and higher education needed to be developed
- a comprehensive framework of assessment was required
- an awareness of career possibilities and personal skill potential had to be fostered in young people long before 16 to enable them to select sensible career paths
- additional funding and resources would be needed and the possibility of involving industry in this should be explored.

The merits of a proposal for 'Individual Action Plans for Young People', developed out of YTS experience, had been a focus of one discussion group and the idea was briefly outlined in plenary session by **David Tinsley**. Such plans might be drawn up for the years 16–18 by 'Youth Training Agents' and pursued with the help of 'Youth Training Managers'. Four elements were proposed: educational qualifications, vocational qualifications, work activity and the development of personal effectiveness, some school or college-led, others employer-led, in a balance appropriate to the needs of the young person.

Change and the Future

Although the conference was nearing its end, **Sir Christopher Ball** admitted that the problems of 16–19 years age range were still not absolutely clear to him. He thought that three things might be stressed. Firstly, we needed to "ask the clients" more often. Secondly, there is need to overcome "the tyranny of the providers": those involved in the provision of education tended to be a self-satisfied group. And thirdly, that the only thing we know for certain about the future is that it will be different. One mistake must be avoided, that of providing for the society of today and yesterday, because tomorrow's society will certainly be different.

> *There is a need to overcome "the tyranny of the providers"*

In a revealing recollection of his own experiences as a 16 year old, Sir Christopher recalled phases of misery and loneliness, and a profound sense of failure, together with something that Kingsley Amis caught in his book entitled *I want it Now*. He had a strong sense of 'immediacy', wishing to "give up this education and training nonsense and live". He developed an antagonism to education and, although a teacher, was still "a lousy pupil". He suggested that many of today's young people feel like that.

Turning to the function of education, he suggested that truly to equip for life it should endeavour to provide a *rôle* (we all need to see our role in society); *aspirations* (we cannot be truly happy without unfulfilled aspirations); and *ideals* (we cannot properly conduct our lives unless we have ideals beyond ourselves).

Whereas in Britain the function of education is debated, in Thailand he was confidently told that education was for (1) national unity (2) wealth creation and (3) personal fulfillment.

Was there not something that the Thais could teach us? In "this extraordinary society of ours with its enormous dissent and its celebration of multiculturalism", should we not be developing a sense of national unity?

In planning for the future the great danger was that we would continue to provide for the 'old agenda'—that which we have accepted with great difficulty over the past 10–15 years. This recognises the importance of the new technologies and of wealth creation, the necessity of handling the problems of unemployment, and the need to create an 'enterprise society'. In which ways will the agenda be different in the future?

Sir Christopher offered ten suggestions:—

- We should recognise that we cannot know the direction that change is going to take.
- Change of our own time is difficult to handle and the rate of change will speed up in the future: "stability is not on the agenda ... change is". Perhaps the best we can do is to help young people to 'learn how to learn' and keep their hopes and confidence unimpaired.

> *Stability is not on the agenda... change is*

- Demographic projections can be made and by 1993 young people will be fewer. Higher Education has faced this and will not suffer: it is the other parts of education and the employment market that will. With abundant job opportunities few will give time to training unless it is rewarded and made relevant.
- The 'recession of the family' will increase, through the proper insistence of women to live their own lives and to be employed.
- Parental control and influence are likely to recede even further, matched as it has been by the growth of peer group pressures. We think of ourselves as models for youth, but for many we are already quite irrelevant.
- The 'enterprise society' will become the 'caring society'.
- Our society, which has been painfully taught to recognise the importance of technological and engineering skills, will need to move towards the recognition of human skills and becoming a 'caring society'.
- There is the issue of the single European market and, beyond that, the single world community. We need to offer the power of mobility and further education gives that.
- We cling to the assumption that education is book based: the potential of the new technologies has to be fully recognised.
- Today's problems are likely to increase—alcoholism, AIDS, drugs and crime. Suicide rates are also rising. We must recognise that having survived the first few weeks after birth the ages between 15 and 25 are much the most difficult.

Sir Christopher concluded by suggesting that we should try to offer a 'three-strand guarantee' to young people:—

- A guarantee that they will be given the opportunity to develop themselves, remembering their need for 'immediacy'.
- A guarantee that we will 'baby-sit' them through the difficult years—as is done by the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. Why should that level of care and concern only be available to the most able?
- A guarantee that when they reach 16 we will find them useful, give them real responsibility and offer them a rôle to be proud of (and that must include some paid employment).

Impediments to the achievement of these objectives included the lack of motivation and self-respect of 16–19 year olds, and the self-interest of the providers.

Finally, he suggested, it would be good if we could say to everyone reaching 16 "Now that you are 16 we will offer you a person, not your teacher or a member of your family, who will care for you, someone who knows what is on offer and can help you make the choices: a friend, a 'care-er', an adviser".

The suggestion that national unity could be an educational focus was taken up in discussion, some fearing an "inward looking Britishness". The speaker agreed that he knew of no society which thought of itself as a society of the world. However, tolerance is something we've been good at and we might learn to celebrate it.

The need for national consensus was stressed, both in terms of the aims of education and of society as a whole, whilst the idea that we faced a choice between an 'enterprise society' and a 'caring society' was disputed. Are they mutually exclusive?

Were we, in our concern for 16–19 year olds, losing faith in their ability to sort themselves out? In response Sir Christopher suggested that the help that young people needed most is for us to say to them that "we will challenge you to the limits of your ability and will catch you if you fall".

Report by Geoffrey J Williams

Participants

Audrey Atter, teacher at Basingstoke Comprehensive School; **Sir Christopher Ball**, Founding Fellow in the Kellogg Visiting Fellowship Programme at the Department for External Studies of the University of Oxford; **Graham Banks**, teacher at Bedales School; **Baroness Blatch**, formerly Leader of the Cambridgeshire County Council and a Government spokesperson on education in the House of Lords; **Ann Bridgewood**, Research Officer at the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales; **Michael Brock**, Warden of St George's House, Windsor Castle; **Elizabeth Burge**, general practitioner; **Ted Burge**, Emeritus Professor of Physics of the University of London and Trustee of the St Catharine's Foundation; **Francis Cattermole**, Director of the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services; **Joe Connor**, Professor of Chemistry and Dean of Natural Sciences at the University of Kent; **Chris Cotton**, Headmaster, St Wilfred's High School, Featherstone, Yorkshire; **David Crampton**, Research and Development Manager with Young Enterprise; **Derek d'Hooghe**, Assistant Director of Education (14–19), Leicestershire; **Michael Edwards**, County Education Officer, Norfolk; **Mike Essex**, Education Project Manager with the Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd.; **David Falcon**, Director-General of the Royal Institute of Public Administration; **Malcolm Flower-Smith**, a Major at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst; **Priscilla Flower-Smith**; **Felicity Freeman**, Deputy Chief-Executive of Project Fullemploy Ltd; **Paul Gormley**, Administrator in DG V (Employment, Social Affairs and Education) at the European Commission in Brussels; **Bill Greenwood**, Assistant Director of Education (Curriculum) for the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan; **Glenda Griffiths**, YTS National Co-ordinator for Marks and Spencer plc; **Mark Hayward**, teacher at Orton Longueville School, Peterborough; **Gordon Higginson**, Vice Chancellor of the University of Southampton; **Brian Hill**, Professor of Education at Murdoch University, Western Australia and Visiting Fellow in the Department of Education, Southampton University; **David Hudson**, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools, Wentworth College, University of York; **David Hunt**, Lecturer in Education, University of Bath; **David Jones**, Director of Mission to the Church of Wales and Provincial Director of Education; **Peter Kelly**, Professor and Dean of Education at Southampton University; **Virginia Kelly**, Tutor in the Learning Disabilities Clinic and Research Fellow at the Informatics Education Unit of the School of Education, Southampton University; **Brian Kington**, Public Affairs Issues Manager, IBM UK Ltd; **John Lipscombe**, Principal of St Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow-on-the-Hill; **Heather MacDonald**, Inspector with Kirklees LEA with responsibility for TVEI; **Gordon McGregor**, Principal of the College of Ripon and York St John; **Margaret Maden**, Deputy Chief Education Officer of the Warwickshire County Council; **Diane Manthorpe**, Director of Nurse Education, Carshalton School of Nursing; **Madeline Melia**, a part-time teacher; **Terry Melia**, Chief Inspector (Higher Education) at the Department of Education and Science; **John Naylor**, National Secretary, England, of the National Council of YMCAs; **David Newbold**, Professor and Dean of Education, Huddersfield Polytechnic; **Stuart Nicholls**, Principal of Peter Symonds' College, Winchester; **Brian O'Riordan**, fisheries specialist with the Intermediate Technology Development Group; **Nick Oulton**, Senior Research Officer with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research; **Sandra Perry**, member of the executive committee of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations; **Peter Robinson**, Deputy Director of Campaign for Work; **Brian Rynn**, Regional Training and Development Manager for British Gas, North Thames; **Stuart Sexton**, Director of the Education Unit of the Institute of Economic Affairs; **Lesley Shanahan**, Assistant Youth Training Officer with J Sainsbury plc; **Kalpana Shenoi**, a teacher at a Southampton Comprehensive School; **Kate Slack**, a drama teacher; **Tim Slack**, Principal of the St Catharine's Foundation; **Ronald Somerville**, Divisional Chairman of T&N plc; **Hilary Steedman**, Senior Research Officer at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research; **Bengt Thelin**, Director of Education, Swedish National Board of Education; **David Tinsley**, Director of the Training Standards Advisory Service; **Joyce Tinsley**, an art teacher; **Christa Veile**, Student Co-ordinator of the St Catharine's Foundation; **Roy Wake**, former H.M. Inspector of Schools and now Visiting Fellow at Southampton University; **Geoff Williams**, Director of Studies of the St Catharine's Foundation.

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